

ME

HR & LEARNING

Spotlight on:

Benjamin Edwards, Head of Training, Ignite, Dubai

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Digital Learning Consultant
with Intuition in Dubai**

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EDITOR'S NOTE

Hello Reader,

As we close out 2025, it's inspiring to look back at the incredible journey our HR & Learning community has taken this year. From major regional events to new research, thought-leadership, and the continued evolution of how people practices intersect with technology, this has been a year of transformation, resilience, and progress.

Throughout 2025, ME HR & Learning has continued to grow as a trusted platform for professionals navigating an increasingly complex world of work. We've seen remarkable contributions from our members—articles, insights, case studies, and bold perspectives that have helped shape discussions across the Middle East. Your expertise has fueled meaningful conversations and strengthened our ecosystem.

As we move into 2026, we are elevating our ambition for the publication. Expect even more powerful content, deeper industry analysis, and increased visibility for our members. We will be showcasing your products, services, and success stories to support your brand presence, lead generation, and commercial growth. Our goal is clear: to position our members not only as contributors but as industry leaders with influence and impact.

This comes at a critical moment. Many HR and Learning professionals are facing unprecedented uncertainty—balancing performance, restructuring, technological disruption, and even the fear of job security. In this climate, our mission becomes even more important. ME HR & Learning will continue to provide support through meaningful conversations, high-value learning resources, expert articles, white papers, and studies that help our community thrive in a new, integrated world of AI-driven technology and human-centred leadership.

Thank you for being part of this journey. Your engagement, insights, and trust are the cornerstone of our success. Together, we move forward—stronger, smarter, and more connected.

Warm regards,

The ME HR & Learning Team



Paul Michael G.



Maggie Williams



Rohit Bassi



Uzair Hassan

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📌 **Peter Kinahan**, Senior Digital Learning Consultant, Intuition, Dubai

Spotlight on Peter Kinahan, Senior Digital Learning Consultant with Intuition in Dubai

Peter Kinahan shares his journey from Financial Journalist to Financial Educator

You've worked extensively across financial journalism, asset management, and now digital learning. Can you tell us about your journey and what inspired your focus on financial education and capability?

I began my career as a financial journalist when the media in general was beginning to understand that finance was absolutely core to just about every aspect of people's lives and therefore newspapers began devoting more and more pages to the subject (it was mostly paper pages back then!).

The centrality of finance, socially and politically - and associated risks - has only grown over time and the crisis of 2008, the effects of which still resound, demonstrated that emphatically. So, my focus on financial education and capability has

the objective of promoting competence in the financial sector as guardians of stability and growth. On the consumer side the objective is to empower them to make the best decisions for their financial well-being. Digital learning solutions have the power to deliver these outcomes with tremendous efficiency; hence I decided to take the opportunity to be part of that.

Having collaborated closely with HR and L&D leaders, what do you see as the most pressing learning and development needs within the financial services sector today particularly in the Middle East?

The Middle East is in the fortunate position of having not just the motive and inclination to invest in the future but the means also. We're seeing extraordinary commitment across the region to take advantage of latest technologies that will position Middle East at the very apex in terms of the sophistication and efficiency of its banking and financial services sector. So, on the professional side, education needs to be extremely cognisant of risk in all its manifestations - credit, market, liquidity, operational - the lot. On the customer side, the first step is to build digital financial literacy and from there take the path towards building a retail investment culture that secures a long-term foundation for enduring prosperity.

You've written extensively on financial literacy and inclusion. How do you see the role of education evolving in empowering both professionals and customers across emerging markets?

On the customer side I believe that institutions increasingly realise that an educated, empowered customer is one that is capable of progressing faster up the ladder of product sophistication. This has positive implications for both consumer and provider. On the professional side, education opens up the infinite possibilities that financial innovation provides. This enables emerging markets to capitalise on the immense potential and advantages they possess relative to the developed world (having been overlooked for far too long).

From your experience leading projects in the Middle East, how does the region's appetite for knowledge and innovation compare to global markets?

Extremely favourably and I would say unrivalled anywhere in the world. There are an appetite and energy that comes with knowing that the three critical ingredients -resources, technology and motivation - are aligned in pursuit of a common goal.

Finally, what continues to motivate you in your work — and what impact do you hope to make on the next generation of learners in finance and beyond?

I would like to think that the people we educate in banking and asset management around the world can take pride in their mission. Banking and finance regularly get bad press, often justifiably, but in the right hands banking and finance holds the keys to economic prosperity and financial liberation. The people involved, and ideally the wider public, should see this as a high calling.

Spotlight on Benjamin Edwards, Head of Training, Ignite, Dubai

Ben Edwards shares his Learning and Development Journey and making Dubai his home.

Tell us about you, your experience, and your time in the Middle East.

I've always been driven to help people learn and perform at their best. My L&D journey began at university, where I led campus tours for schoolchildren. I wanted them to see that university was not just for a select few, but open to anyone.

After graduating, the tables turned. I started working in schools across some of the most disadvantaged areas in the North West of England. My role was to equip young people with practical life skills rarely taught in classrooms, such as managing finances and writing CVs. I also took them on trips to universities, giving them the same first-hand experiences I once delivered as a student. These years taught me the value of creating environments where people can stretch beyond the limits of their own 'little world'.

In 2018, I moved to Dubai to join Ignite, and the Middle East quickly felt like home. The pace of change in the region is remarkable, and it constantly challenges you to evolve. After several years with Ignite, I spent a short time back in the UK before realising that Dubai is where both my family and I truly belong. I also gained valuable experience at Chalhoub Group, working in luxury fashion and beauty while supporting core business functions.

Earlier in 2025, I returned to Ignite as Head of Training. What continues to inspire me is seeing individuals, from graduates to senior leaders, unlock new levels of confidence and capability. Watching them challenge themselves to grow beyond their own 'little world' is what makes the work so rewarding.

How would you describe the culture of your business?

Ignite's culture is collaborative, pragmatic, and very outcome-focused. We're not interested in training for the sake of it; every programme has to make a measurable difference to how teams perform. That pushes us to stay practical and aligned with business needs, while keeping a strong human element at the centre.

What I really appreciate is the balance of empathy and accountability. We talk about resilience,



wellbeing, and performance inside our own team as much as we do with clients. That consistency makes our work authentic.

How easy is it for you to get direct access to the decision-makers in your company?

Very easy. As Head of Training, I take ownership of the decisions that shape how our programmes are designed and delivered. At the same time, accountability is never just individual. As a team, we challenge, support and hold one another to the commitments we make. Regular meetings create the space to assign responsibilities clearly and follow through on them. Accountability is not about pressure, but about clarity and trust,

👤 **Benjamin Edwards,**
Head of Training, Ignite, Dubai

knowing that each person has a role in delivering the result.

Ignite is a lean and agile organisation, which means decisions move quickly. If something makes sense and aligns with our purpose, we act with confidence and back each other to deliver.

That agility extends to our work with clients.

I have the privilege of engaging directly with HR leaders, executives, and CEOs to understand their challenges and co-create learning journeys that respond to real business pressures.

What are your biggest challenges in the next 5 years?

One of the biggest challenges is keeping pace with the rapid transformation in the UAE's economy, from AI adoption to shifting workforce demographics and the continued focus on Emiratisation. The skills required today won't necessarily be the skills needed tomorrow, so our role is to help organisations and their people stay adaptable.

Another challenge is ensuring resilience and psychological safety keep pace with the pressures of growth. Many industries in the UAE are high-performance and high-pressure. Helping organisations support wellbeing while driving results will be crucial for long-term sustainability.

What are the skills and competencies that you would need in order to meet the region's talent requirements?

Three areas stand out

Resilience and psychological safety - ensuring individuals and teams can manage stress, adapt quickly, and sustain performance in high-pressure environments.

AI literacy - giving people the confidence to integrate AI into their work and ask the right ethical and practical questions

Inclusive leadership - leaders must be able to connect across diverse teams and create conditions where everyone feels valued and motivated.

At Ignite, we bring these competencies to life through experiential learning - whether it's business simulations, behavioural profiling with the Jigsaw Discovery Tool, or frameworks like i-act and Red2Blue. The aim is always the same: to make learning stick and to help people perform when it matters most.

Spotlight on Where Are They Now? Bobbi Hartshorne, WellWise

WellWise Founder, CEO, Speaker, Author, Podcaster shares her new life in Portugal

Two years ago, we featured Bobbi Hartshorne, then based in the UAE and carving out a niche in leadership, culture, and organisational wellbeing. Today, Bobbi's base is Aveiro, Portugal, where she balances life in a historic tiled street with a portfolio of international work and a major home renovation project alongside her husband.

A new chapter in Portugal

After more than a decade in the UAE, Bobbi felt it was the right moment to rebalance. The UAE had given her extraordinary opportunities and shaped her career in profound ways, but she wanted a base that offered both European roots, global reach, and an abundance of nature and tranquility. Portugal brought that combination.

Life in Aveiro has a very different pace. Weekends are for exploration and a Mornings often start with a walk by the river, intentional break from work and renovations. and sometimes a swim if the weather and her Bobbi and her husband can often be found motivation allow it. Days are then filled with hiking Portugal's trails, visiting historical sites, consultancy calls, developing WellWise or seeking out places of outstanding natural projects, and writing her weekly WiseTalk beauty that the country offers in abundance. articles. Evenings are slower, spent in yoga, **Reflections on the UAE** tending to her pot plants, or visiting the local Looking back, Bobbi is quick to credit the UAE café for great sunsets over the beach. A major with shaping her worldview. "The sheer renovation of their home on a classically ambition and pace of the region is unmatched. Portuguese tile-lined street has anchored them Being surrounded by leaders unafraid to think in the community. "It has been both challenging big, and working alongside them, taught me and inspiring, and a reminder that building how to combine bold vision with practical something meaningful always takes patience." execution."

At the same time, she observed a truth that has shaped much of her current focus. "No idea, however great, can take root efficiently in a strained operating environment and this is a challenge many organisations are currently facing. I am ambitious to enable leaders to create the conditions upon which innovation and success can be sustained."

Equally important was the exposure to so many nationalities, cultures, and perspectives. "It made me realise both the power of a truly diverse workforce and the reality that people bring very different needs and drivers to work. That lesson stayed with me and is now a central part of the demographic analysis we embed in the WellWise diagnostic."

There were challenges too. The relentless speed of life in the UAE left little room for pause. "I sometimes wish I had taken more time to step back and reflect. That is a discipline I am much more intentional about now."

Her advice for anyone considering a move to the Gulf is clear. "Go with an open mind and invest

in relationships. If you are willing to adapt, it can be one of the most rewarding chapters of your career.”

WellWise: clarity from complexity

Professionally, the past two years have seen the launch and adoption of the WellWise diagnostic platform Bobbi founded to help organisations address psychosocial risk, human sustainability, and organisational health. “Most tools measure sentiment. WellWise measures the system. It shows leaders what is really shaping performance and wellbeing, and gives them clarity on where to act.”

Beyond the diagnostic, Bobbi continues to consult on people strategy, risks, leadership development, and training. The model has combined both advisory projects to longer partnerships, giving clients evidence-led insight and the support to turn data into measurable change.

WiseTalk and what is next

Bobbi also shares weekly reflections through WiseTalk, her LinkedIn series on leadership, human sustainability, and organisational health. Recent topics have included resilience fatigue, belonging as a business strategy, and an update (and warning) about the evolving psychological contract in the modern workplace. “It is my way of sparking conversations with leaders who want to go beyond surface fixes toward evidence-based human-sustainability.”

Although based in Portugal, Bobbi remains closely connected to the UAE and wider region. She visits regularly to deliver consultancy, training, and leadership development. In November 2025 she will be back as a judge at the MENTL Awards and to present a new WellWise case study at the Wellbeing Leaders Symposium in Dubai.

Asked what she might have done differently, Bobbi pauses. “I would not change the big moves. They have all taught me something important. What I would change is allowing the pace of life to crowd out moments of reflection. The trick is to build the habit of taking stock of how far you have come and giving yourself permission to breathe.”



📍 **Bobbi Hartshorne**, WellWise,
Author, Speaker, Podcaster, Dubai & Portugal

Resilience in the GCC Workforce -The New Strategic Priority

In volatile uncertainty resilience is the key, says Farhan Bhatti, Business Psychologist, Middle East

Across the GCC, organizations are under constant pressure to adapt. Volatile markets, economic diversification, hybrid working models, and rapid technological change have created an environment where traditional HR strategies no longer suffice. In this context, resilience has become more than a buzzword — it is now a defining capability for individuals, leaders, and organizations.

Why Resilience Matters in the GCC

Studies consistently show that resilient employees demonstrate stronger engagement, improved wellbeing, and higher productivity. In fast-moving economies like the UAE and Saudi Arabia, resilience goes beyond recovery from setbacks; it is about the ability to adapt, sustain performance, and thrive in continuous transformation.

For HR and L&D leaders, this means resilience must be integrated into leadership pipelines, talent strategies, and organizational development — not treated as an optional wellbeing initiative.

The Digital Gap in HR Practice

Despite its importance, many organizations in the Middle East still lack structured approaches to measure and develop resilience. Engagement surveys are common, but resilience frameworks remain underused or locked in academic research. This gap leaves HR leaders without the tools to track and build the adaptability their workforce needs.

Emerging Regional Solutions

Encouragingly, new digital ecosystems are beginning to address this challenge. Platforms such as Business Psychologist Middle East (BPME) are making resilience frameworks more accessible by::

- Offering GCC-tailored assessments and surveys.
- Providing access to psychologists, coaches, and consultants in one integrated ecosystem.
- Hosting data within the UAE to ensure compliance with local data protection regulations.

- Connecting HR professionals to communities of practice where best practice can be shared.

This signals a step change in how resilience can be embedded into HR strategy — moving from theory into scalable, practical solutions..

Resilience as a Competitive Advantage

Organizations that act now to build resilience will be better positioned to attract and retain talent, sustain innovation, and navigate disruption. Those who fail to integrate resilience into their culture risk higher turnover, lower wellbeing, and reduced competitiveness in a rapidly evolving market.

Conclusion

In the GCC, resilience is no longer optional — it is the new competitive advantage. With research-backed frameworks and the rise of digital ecosystems such as BPME, HR and L&D leaders finally have the tools to embed resilience into their organizations at scale. The question is not if resilience should be prioritized, but how quickly it can be built into the fabric of the workforce.



What Happens When HR Is Asked to Just Fix It!

Debbie Nicol, business in motion, Dubai, explains Why That Might Be the Best Thing That Happened to You.

Strategic HR Directors — I know your world well. I've stood where you stand.

Strategic CHRO roles often face tough, hard-to-measure challenges. Discover how reframing them unlocks two key benefits — with a practical example from PresencePro.

It wasn't uncommon to hear:

- 'Can you fix it please?'
 - o This was requested when people issues were too intangible for a policy to cover.
- 'Make it happen.'
 - o This was often requested when an organizational measurement system had no real substance behind it.

Cue the internal voice: What am I supposed to do with this one? Why is this landing on my desk — again?

Then it hit me. These weren't frustrations; they were invitations. Opportunities in disguise.

Challenge 1:

'Fix it!' When solutions are built for misunderstood issues.

Sometimes the problem wasn't the absence of measurement, but rather its irrelevance.

Across GCC organizations, I'd see metrics that served little purpose, like reporting how many attended a training program, without tracking how many applied what they learned. The data existed, but the insight didn't. The real issue of training for increased productivity was marginalized.

That same gap shows up when HR teams are asked to 'include Executive Presence as a leadership competency'. When the concept of Executive Presence is not understood or agreed upon, even the best leaders who are generally the best learners, are unable or unwilling to commit their time to a proposed solution.

Today's leaders, especially in modern GCC organizations, expect:

- Independence in learning
- Meaning that translates into their reality
- Trust and hope, not more theory
- Customization and choice
- Multi-mode learning flexibility
- Clarity through simplicity
- Practicality, accountability, and measurable results

PresencePro was designed with this modern leader in mind, a Blueprint and toolkit built for measurable Executive Presence and sustainable leadership impact. It blends AI-assisted learning with data-driven insights to help HR and L&D teams achieve tangible ROI in leadership development.

Early participants have shown higher engagement and long-term behavioural change, both proof that when learning is relevant, it resonates.

Just because you build it doesn't mean they'll come — especially in leadership learning.

Challenge 2:

‘Make a measurement happen’! — When the intangible becomes visible.

Every HR leader knows the pressure of quantifying the unquantifiable. Loyalty. Psychological safety. Trust. Even Executive Presence.

Without definition, these critical elements become open to bias and debate and are practically immeasurable.

As Brené Brown told Adam Grant, ‘Executive Presence is useless. Nobody even knows what it means.’ That frustration echoes across HR strategy tables from Dubai to Dammam, and beyond.

That’s why business en motion created PresencePro and its associated PresencePro Navigator, a GCC-born, globally relevant system that transforms intangibles into measurable outcomes.

- The PresencePro Blueprint defines what Executive Presence really is: a leadership trait that builds trust, influence, impact and change.
- *The PresencePro Navigator360 measures it fairly, through validated perception data.*
- *And the PresencePro AI-assisted learning journey called Future-Proof Your Leadership grows it Executive Presence, linking insight to measurable leadership outcomes that align with business strategy.*

The result? A leadership development solution that moves beyond activity to evidence of change and impact.

The Strategic Advantage for HR

In today’s GCC leadership development landscape, the CHRO should not be just the custodian of learning. It should see its role as the architect of measurable culture.

With PresencePro, strategic HR leaders can finally:

- *Define Executive Presence with clarity and consistency.*
- *Measure it fairly, across teams and levels.*
- *Develop it sustainably, through personalized, AI-supported pathways.*

Where HR once had to ‘fix it’ or ‘make it measurable’, PresencePro has taken all of the hard work out of it for you. Executive Presence is now defined, measured and able to be developed.

A system built for modern leaders, measurable cultures, and the strategic HR function shaping the GCC’s leadership future.



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The Future Of Work: The Adoption of AI & Automation Skills in Law Firms

Maisa Maarouf, Head of HR at BSA LAW shares her insights into the adoption of AI into the Legal Profession

The legal industry faces an ongoing transformation because artificial intelligence (AI) and automation systems now affect them deeply. The Middle East law firms face an essential challenge to develop their human resources because technology now actively transforms their operational methods and competitive advantage and workforce management systems.

AI and Automation: Reshaping Legal Operations

The legal sector has progressed beyond theoretical discussions about AI because AI technology now actively transforms legal work. The legal sector of law firms has started to adopt AI technology for their fundamental business activities. A report published in Khaleej Times recently shows that major UAE law firms now use AI systems to perform document evaluation and legal information retrieval. The implementation of Generative AI technology allows lawyers to dedicate their time to essential work such as strategic planning, client relationship development and complex legal analysis.

The implementation of automation technology in HR departments leads to operational efficiency improvements when it is used the right way. AI based recruitment platforms and some companies now perform candidate search functions, screening processes and complete onboarding procedures. The new processes enable faster and more precise candidate selection which results in shorter

hiring periods and better candidate matches. The fast-paced nature of Dubai's job market enables organizations to gain substantial competitive advantages.

AI in HR delivers more than speed because it provides organizations with valuable insights. The predictive analytical system helps organizations flag employee departure risks and monitor employee engagement levels as well as generates data-based workforce planning recommendations. The new capabilities enable HR departments to transition from administrative work into strategic business partnerships.

The skill requirements for lawyers and HR professionals now push them to develop digital competencies and emotional intelligence skills in addition to their legal and technical abilities. This combined capability equips them to exploit AI while preserving the human dimension that machines can never replace.

The legal profession requires professionals to learn how to work with technology by evaluating AI outputs and making ethical decisions and handling data effectively. Digital literacy skills enable HR professionals to create employee development programs which teach team members to thrive in environments where humans and technology collaborate.

The HR department needs to locate and train new talent profiles while maintaining the fundamental values of trust, integrity and professional conduct.

Redefining the Employee Experience

The implementation of AI technology has brought big changes to how organizations provide experiences to their employees. The automation of tasks including leave and performance management enables HR teams

to concentrate on developing strategic programs that focus on employee engagement, talent development and employee wellbeing.

The adoption of flexible work arrangements and hybrid models has transformed what employees need from their workplace environment. Organizations throughout Dubai and the GCC use digital tools for team collaboration and performance tracking to support remote work success. The main challenge for HR departments involves maintaining employee connection and purpose in their new hybrid work environment.

Digital systems enable organizations to obtain valuable data, but human leadership combined with empathy and communication skills remains essential for building strong workplace cultures.

Ethics and Control - A Shared Responsibility

The increasing adoption of AI technology in legal work and HR operations creates multiple ethical problems that need proper management. The protection of employee data privacy and avoidance of bias and maintenance of confidentiality require special attention because UAE regulatory systems continue to develop.

The organization needs to maintain complete visibility about its AI system operations to all stakeholders. The organization needs to disclose its AI system usage to candidates and employees during recruitment and evaluation processes. Organizations that establish proper governance systems will achieve both regulatory compliance and maintain employee trust which forms the base for successful HR initiatives.

This aligns with wider regional trends: the UAE government's ambition to use AI in drafting legislation itself (Financial Times, April 2025) reflects how deeply AI is becoming embedded in governance. For HR leaders, this highlights the importance of ethical literacy and policy alignment.

HR as the Mechanism for Change

The modern law firm requires HR professionals to perform duties that exceed

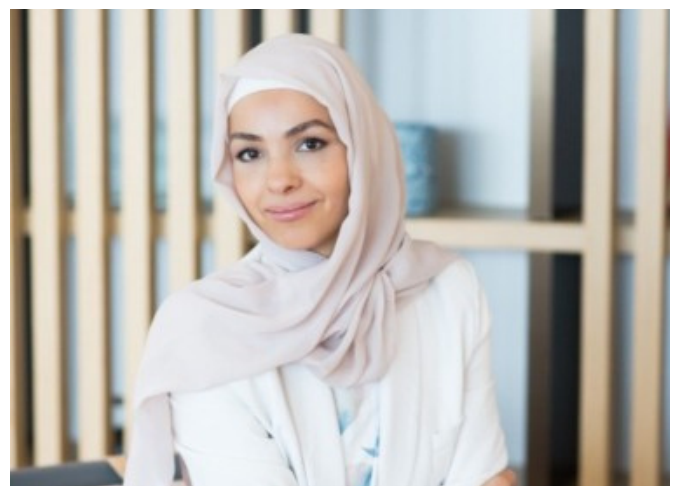
their traditional administrative work. The future workforce requires our leadership to execute digital transformation while promoting ongoing education and maintaining human centered technology adoption. The HR team must be equipped to transform disruption into business opportunities through their support of AI literacy programs, their commitment to ethical decision making and employee skill development.

The organizations which will succeed in this new business environment will use technology to create human centered solutions rather than implementing it at the fastest pace. The combination of human judgment and empathy with creative thinking will maintain its position as the foundation for excellence in legal work even though AI systems improve operational efficiency.

What's Next

The future of work in law requires technology to serve people by making their work more efficient. The legal ecosystem's integration of AI and automation requires HR leaders to maintain progress which supports both sustainability and ethical practices and complete inclusion.

The interpretation and advisory work along with relationship development remains the domain of human beings even though technology handles data processing tasks. Our HR mission focuses on building workplaces that use technology to enhance human potential.



➔ **Maisa Maarouf**, Head of HR at BSA LAW, Dubai, UAE

A New Leadership Paradigm is Emerging

From Burnout to Balance: The Future of Regenerative Leadership by **Julie Lewis, Leadership Strategist, Dubai**

In today's world of relentless change, complexity, and constant connectivity, leadership has too often been measured by endurance — how much pressure one can absorb, how long one can keep going, and how many targets can be hit. The cost of this outdated paradigm is clear: record levels of burnout, stress-related illness, and disengagement. The World Health Organization now classifies burnout as an occupational phenomenon, estimating its economic cost at **\$322 billion annually** through absenteeism, presenteeism, and turnover. In the UAE, the **Cigna 360 Global Wellbeing Survey (2024)** reports that **98% of employees feel stressed**, with more than half citing work as the primary cause.

The truth is simple: sustainable leadership is not achieved through doing more, but through balancing peak performance with recovery, presence, and wellbeing. Regeneration, not relentless exertion, is the real foundation of long-term effectiveness.

From Performance to Regeneration

Over the past two decades, I've led more than 70 expeditions across the globe — from the Arctic to the Antarctic — guiding leaders to discover what nature has always known: regeneration is essential for growth and resilience. Every ecosystem thrives through cycles of exertion and renewal. Yet in corporate

environments, I continually saw leaders operating in “survival mode,” fuelled by adrenaline, caffeine, and willpower.

This realization led me to develop **The Regenerative Leadership Model**, a nature-inspired framework that restores equilibrium between output and renewal, doing and being, achievement and alignment.

The Business Case for Regenerative Leadership

The ROI of regeneration is clear and measurable.

- **McKinsey (2023)** found that executives who incorporate intentional recovery experience **41% higher creativity, 31% better decision-making, and 40% greater team engagement**.
- **Harvard Business Review** asserts that energy management — not time management — is the key to sustainable performance.
- **Stanford research** shows that chronic stress reduces cognitive flexibility, empathy, and innovation — the very qualities modern leadership requires.

Regenerative leadership is not a luxury. It is a strategic imperative.

The Regenerative Leadership Model: Ten Elements

This model integrates ten interconnected elements that mirror the wisdom of nature and the foundations of human wellbeing:

- **Think – Mental Clarity:** Mindfulness, reflection, and time in nature enhance focus and decision-making. Just 20 minutes outdoors can reduce cortisol and restore cognitive function.
- **Eat – Nourishment:** Food shapes mood and performance. Whole, unprocessed foods rich in omega-3s and antioxidants improve resilience and concentration.
- **Move – Embodied Energy:** Movement increases neuroplasticity and creativity. Studies show that walking outdoors boosts divergent thinking by 60%, enhancing problem-solving.
- **Sleep – Rest Strategy:** Quality sleep strengthens emotional regulation, memory, and presence — the most underrated performance tool available.
- **Hydrate – Essential Flow:** A mere 2% drop in hydration impairs mood, focus, and decision-making. Start each morning with 500ml of water to rehydrate the brain and restore clarity.
- **Breathe – Nervous System Reset:** Breathwork techniques regulate the vagus nerve, shifting the body from stress to calm and restoring emotional balance.
- **Silent Energy Practices – Inner Reset:** Stillness through meditation, journaling, or quiet time strengthens intuition and empathy — core to emotionally intelligent leadership.
- **Nature – Regeneration:** Practices such as forest bathing reduce blood pressure, boost immunity, and elevate mood. Nature reconnects leaders to perspective and purpose.
- **Personalized & Precision Health:** Wearables and biomarker testing offer insights into stress, recovery, and inflammation. Personalized data supports smarter wellbeing choices.
- **Community – Connection & Collaboration:** Teams that experience psychological safety are 2.5 times more innovative. Regenerative cultures prioritize belonging and trust.

At the center of all these elements is **Purpose** — the compass that guides decisions, behaviour, and resilience.

Bringing Regeneration Into the Workplace

Organizations can embed regenerative principles through small but meaningful shifts:

- **Model Recovery at the Top:** Leaders who prioritise wellbeing give their teams permission to do the same.
- **Design Rhythmic Workflows:** Replace back-to-back meetings with short recovery breaks to restore focus and energy.
- **Create Regenerative Spaces:** Biophilic design, natural light, and outdoor access increase productivity and reduce sick days.
- **Offer Personalized Wellness Programs:** Move from generic initiatives to individualized, data-informed wellbeing strategies.
- **Facilitate Nature-Based Learning:** Outdoor leadership experiences help teams build adaptability and deepen connection.

- **Measure What Matters:** Track energy, engagement, and vitality alongside revenue and operational metrics.

The Regenerative Advantage

Leaders who are rested, nourished, and grounded make better decisions, inspire trust, and cultivate thriving cultures. Just as nature's most resilient ecosystems flourish through reciprocity and renewal, future-ready organizations will be those that build rhythm and regeneration into their leadership DNA.

After 20 years living and working in the Middle East, I see a region ready to embrace this new paradigm — one that blends science, nature, and human potential.



Leadership During Crisis

How to Maintain Clarity and Confidence When Crisis Hits

The Middle East is no stranger to disruption. From climate-driven events such as flash floods and extreme heat affecting infrastructure, to geopolitical shifts altering trade and investment flows, leaders across the region are often called to steer their organisations through uncertainty. In such moments, effective leadership is less about avoiding crises and more about responding with clarity, confidence, and resilience when the unexpected occurs.

Preparedness as a Leadership Imperative

The most effective leaders recognise that crisis preparedness is not a luxury but an essential part of business resilience. According to the International SOS' Global Crisis Management White Paper, organisations that invest in foresight and structured crisis planning recover faster and sustain less reputational and financial damage. Leaders should prioritise building robust contingency frameworks, regularly stress-testing business models, and rehearsing escalation

Strategic Thinking Under Pressure

Crises demand rapid yet informed decision-making. The instinct to focus solely on immediate firefighting can be strong, but resilient leaders keep the bigger picture in view. The ability to step back, assess long-term implications, and align tactical actions with strategic objectives sets apart organisations that emerge stronger. This dual focus, addressing today's disruption while protecting tomorrow's stability, prevents short-term reactions from undermining future resilience.

Navigating Infrastructure Breakdowns

The region's recent experiences with power outages, transport disruption, and supply chain bottlenecks highlight the importance of planning for infrastructure fragility. Leaders should ensure that business continuity strategies account for alternative logistics, remote working capabilities, and employee safety protocols. Embedding flexibility into operations not only minimises downtime but also demonstrates to stakeholders that the organisation is prepared for multiple contingencies.

The Human Dimension of Leadership

Clarity and confidence are not only strategic but also human qualities. During high-pressure

moments, how leaders communicate is as important as the decisions they make. Transparent, timely, and empathetic communication fosters trust—both internally with employees and externally with clients, partners, and regulators. Visible composure from leadership reassures teams that the organisation remains in control, even amid volatility.



📍 **Sebastian Bedu**, General Manager,
International SOS Middle East

Building a Culture of Resilience

Ultimately, crisis leadership in the Middle East requires a balance of preparation, adaptability, and people-centred thinking. By anticipating risks, empowering teams, and maintaining open lines of communication, leaders can navigate turbulence while safeguarding long-term growth. In doing so, they not only guide their organisations through disruption but also embed resilience into the organisational DNA.

Crisis is inevitable; how leaders respond is not. Those who prepare, adapt, and lead with clarity and confidence will not just withstand the storm—they will shape a stronger future for their organisations and the region at large.

How UAE Companies Are Investing in Mental Health and Wellbeing

Dr Ryan Copeland shares insights on Mental Health, Regional Medical Director, Middle East, International SOS

Across the United Arab Emirates, mental health has firmly shifted from being a peripheral issue to a central element of workforce strategy. Today, organisations recognise that the mental wellbeing of employees is closely tied to business performance, reputation and resilience. For HR professionals in particular, supporting mental health is no longer simply a matter of compliance or compassion; it has become a defining measure of leadership, culture and operational strength.

From Awareness to Action

A few years ago, discussions around mental health in the workplace were limited, often confined to annual awareness campaigns or one-off workshops. Now, many UAE employers are embedding wellbeing into their business frameworks. This evolution reflects a growing understanding that mental health is fundamental to productivity, safety and long-term sustainability.

At International SOS, we have seen a significant rise in demand for mental health support across the Middle East, with UAE organisations leading many of these conversations. In the past two years, mental health-related assistance cases managed through our Assistance Centres have increased substantially. This uptick shows both an encouraging openness among employees to seek help and a strong commitment from employers to provide access to professional, confidential care.

What once may have been considered a sensitive topic is now treated as a measurable, reportable and strategic business area.

The HR Imperative

For HR leaders, the relationship between wellbeing and business performance is well documented. Employees who feel psychologically safe are more engaged, productive and loyal. Those working under chronic stress or anxiety are more likely to take extended leave, underperform or disengage entirely.

The financial argument is also clear. Studies consistently show that for every dirham invested in workplace mental health, organisations can see multiple returns in the form of reduced absenteeism, lower turnover and improved morale. More than half (53%) of the senior leaders recently surveyed by Bupa[1] reported significant improvements in productivity after adopting wellbeing initiatives. Additionally, nearly half (49%) of the employers observed greater employee engagement, and 36% noted a reduction in absenteeism.

For HR professionals, this correlation strengthens the case for making mental health investment a board-level priority.

The Evolving Landscape of Mental Health Support

Leading organisations in the UAE are now adopting a blend of evidence-based approaches that

combine accessibility, cultural sensitivity and measurable impact. The survey also indicates that 88% of companies in the UAE are planning to increase their investment in employee wellbeing programmes in 2025, driven by a clear Return on Wellbeing Investment (ROWI)[2]. The most effective programmes share several common characteristics:

1. **Integrated Employee Assistance Programmes (EAPs):**Traditional EAPs offered counselling as an add-on service. Today, they are integrated into broader occupational health systems, providing employees with 24/7 access to confidential counselling, digital therapy modules and clinical referral pathways. These services are often multilingual, allowing organisations to reach diverse workforces spread across multiple locations.
2. **Blended Models of Care:**While digital self-help tools and mobile applications have made mental health resources more accessible, lasting impact requires clinical oversight. The most successful models combine digital support with clinician-led case management, ensuring that employees with higher-risk concerns are identified early and guided to appropriate care.
3. **Manager Enablement and Psychological Safety:**Managers play a critical role in creating open, supportive environments. Training line managers to recognise early signs of distress, hold empathetic conversations and understand escalation processes can dramatically improve early intervention rates. At International SOS, we have delivered such training to several UAE-based multinationals, helping them build confidence and consistency in how mental health issues are managed across departments.
4. **Data-Driven Insights:**Organisations are increasingly using anonymised data to evaluate the effectiveness of their well-being initiatives. Metrics such as utilisation rates, stress levels, engagement scores and absence data help HR teams identify trends and make informed decisions.

Navigating Cultural Diversity and Local Context

The UAE's workforce is one of the most diverse globally, representing more than 200 nationalities. This diversity brings immense strength and innovation, yet it also adds complexity when addressing mental health and wellbeing. Cultural perceptions of psychological health can differ significantly. Topics openly discussed in one culture may be considered sensitive or stigmatised in another.

To foster true inclusivity, organisations are increasingly tailoring their communication and wellbeing initiatives to resonate across cultural contexts. This includes offering multilingual resources, ensuring strict confidentiality, and aligning programmes with local values and customs.

At International SOS, we apply a culturally attuned approach to mental health. Our teams conduct tailored assessments to understand workforce health status, behaviours, and psychosocial risks. Based on these insights, we design customised wellbeing programmes and deliver interactive training sessions and workshops that empower both managers and

employees to recognise, address, and support mental health effectively.

Preparing for Crisis Situations

The need for mental health support extends beyond everyday wellbeing. When crises occur - whether a workplace incident, a natural disaster, or regional unrest - the psychological effects can ripple through an organisation. Having pre-established frameworks for psychological first aid and trauma management ensures that employees receive timely, appropriate care when it is needed most.

In recent years, International SOS has supported multiple UAE-based companies during critical incidents by deploying mental health professionals to provide on-site and virtual support. These interventions have included counselling for affected staff, leadership briefings, and structured follow-up to monitor recovery. Organisations that have embedded psychological care within their crisis management plans consistently demonstrate faster recovery times and higher employee confidence following major events.

Measuring Success and Building the Business Case

To maintain executive buy-in, HR leaders must be able to measure and communicate the impact of mental health initiatives. Useful indicators include utilisation rates, reductions in absenteeism, improvements in employee engagement scores, and feedback from staff surveys.

Quantifying these outcomes helps transform mental health from a “soft” initiative into a strategic performance driver.

Data transparency also allows HR teams to refine programmes continuously, expanding what works and adjusting what does not.

At the same time, qualitative results should not be overlooked. Employees who feel supported through mental health challenges often report increased trust in their employer, stronger team cohesion and a deeper sense of belonging, all of which contribute to retention and long-term success.

Practical Steps for HR and Learning Teams

For organisations beginning or expanding their mental health strategy, the following steps can serve as a practical framework:

- **Conduct a needs assessment:**
Gather anonymous feedback and data to identify specific workforce challenges.
- **Build an integrated model:**
Combine digital access with clinical oversight and escalation protocols.
- **Train leaders and managers:**
Equip them to identify and address well-being concerns confidently and compassionately.
- **Include psychological support in crisis planning:** Integrate mental health considerations into business continuity and emergency response frameworks.

- **Measure and communicate outcomes:** Share progress and success stories with leadership and employees to sustain momentum.

Looking Ahead

The evolution of mental health in UAE workplaces reflects a broader transformation in how organisations define success. Beyond profit and productivity, there is a growing recognition that resilience, engagement and human sustainability are equally vital. This is also in line with the UAE's National Strategy

for Wellbeing 2031[3], with mental health being a core pillar.

HR leaders have a pivotal role to play in driving this agenda - not only by implementing programmes, but by shaping cultures where mental health is understood, prioritised and normalised. By investing in accessible clinical support, data-driven strategies and culturally attuned communication, UAE employers are redefining Duty of Care for the modern era. In doing so, they are building workforces that are not only healthier and more productive, but also better equipped to navigate the uncertainties of a rapidly changing world.



📍 **Dr Ryan Copeland**, Regional Medical Director,
Middle East, International SOS

AI IN EDUCATION

From 'about AI' to 'with AI': lessons that build judgment, creativity and real-world workflows.

Chat With History

AI FOR TEACHERS

The workload on teachers is ever-increasing, with thousands leaving the profession each year. They won't be replaced by robots- they'll be succeeded by forward-thinking teachers who use new tools to streamline the grind and refocus on what matters most: pupils. Let AI be your co-pilot: cut the time spent on admin, and spark fresh, creative ideas when you're running on empty. LessonLab makes this simple. Need a plan for a lesson you've never taught—or something clear for a cover supervisor? Use our planning tools. Need evidence-informed strategies for tricky behaviour? Our Behaviour Management tool helps identify the root cause and suggests practical actions. Facing report season? Progress Reports turns teacher notes into accurate, personalised write-ups in minutes. And next in this fast-moving space: turning data into impact- securely using student progress to tailor every learner's journey, with teachers in control. We've got that coming soon!



George Wescott
Primary Teacher
Founder of LessonLab

AI FOR STUDENTS

We prepare students for the “big-wide-world”. You know, the one where we regularly use pythagorus or simplifying quadratic equations... right? What we should be doing is preparing students to succeed with the tools they'll actually have. But we can't just hand out ChatGPT and call it a day. That's where Study Rooms by LessonLab comes in: a safeguarded, teacher-led chatbot that coaches thinking without doing the work. You set the brief (“Talk through the strategy for fractions”), and the system keeps pupils on task- if someone asks for the final answer or drifts off-topic, it blocks the request and alerts you. Students build real tool-fluency- prompting, checking, citing, reflecting- while you keep full oversight. To remove language barriers, Language Boards turn key vocabulary into on-device sound boards: auto-created, tappable buttons with icons and correct pronunciation, so every learner can hear it, say it, and use it confidently in class.

Women In Leadership: Globally Acclaimed SHINE Programme Launches in the GCC to Empower Female Leaders

The programme created by RoundTable Global is available across the GCC

SHINE, an internationally recognised female leadership and empowerment programme created by **RoundTable Global**, is now available to corporations across the GCC. The programme brings a distinct, structured, and research-driven approach to accelerating women's leadership in the region. Marking 10 years of empowering women, SHINE is designed to develop confident, future-focused leaders and strengthen workplace culture.

Implemented by major global organisations such as Danone and Renault, the companies have embedded SHINE into their leadership development strategies. Its introduction to the GCC offers regional companies access to a globally tested framework that supports inclusive growth, enhances leadership capability, and aligns with international standards for gender equity and talent development.

SHINE delivers eight weeks of guided, personalised leadership development, combining a four-day immersive module - virtual or in-person, with a one-day integration session, one-to-one and peer coaching, and access to a long-term support community. Each session is tailored to participants, blending self-awareness, emotional resilience, and authentic empowerment. Feedback highlights breakthroughs in communication,

decision-making, and confidence, with many describing SHINE as a transformative space that reshapes how they lead, work, and live.

With the UAE consistently positioning itself as a regional leader in advancing gender equity and promoting women in leadership, SHINE aligns with this national agenda by providing a structured, research-driven programme that nurtures female leaders, helping them develop the confidence, skills, and resilience needed to thrive in their roles.

"SHINE was created to go beyond traditional leadership programs.

Our aim is to provide women with a space to reconnect with their authentic power, explore their potential, and develop leadership that is both confident and compassionate. Every session is designed to meet participants where they are, helping them create meaningful shifts that last well beyond the program," said Tiffany Kelly, Founder at RoundTable Global.

Designed for female professionals, entrepreneurs, and organisations looking to accelerate female leadership, SHINE stands out as a leading program in gender equality,

wellbeing, and human-centred leadership, delivering meaningful development with measurable impact.



Ladies of the **First Shine Leadership Development Course**, UAE

The University of Manchester, Dubai, Champions Women's Leadership at Middle East Women's Summit, Riyadh

Underlining its commitment to fostering women's leadership and supporting talent development across the Middle East, the University of Manchester participated in the Forbes Middle East Women's Summit in Riyadh.

The University of Manchester – Dubai, participated in the Forbes Middle East Women's Summit, held in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. The Summit brought together leading voices from across the region and beyond, celebrating the achievements of women in government, business, academia, and the charitable sector, and advancing the dialogue on female leadership and sustainable development.

The University of Manchester – Dubai's participation in this prestigious event underlines its commitment to fostering women's leadership and supporting talent development across the Middle East. Since its establishment in Dubai in 2006, the Middle East branch has empowered thousands of working professionals, including a growing number of women who are now among the region's top leaders and performers.

Today, the Middle East branch stands as the largest and most diverse in the University's international network, with students representing 109 nationalities.

Speaking at the Summit, **Randa Bessiso, Founding Director, Middle East**, joined a panel of distinguished leaders and shared insights from her own journey and the University's work in empowering women. "Women are reaching leadership positions in all walks of life and across all sectors. They play a hugely significant role in social and economic development, and are vital in meeting the call to action for a more sustainable world. While barriers remain, the support and encouragement for women in leadership have never been greater. The single biggest barrier to success is often self-confidence, and it is our responsibility to nurture that confidence and provide the right opportunities," Bessiso commented.

The University's teaching approach, the Manchester Method – learning by doing – enables students to work on real-world challenges, build confidence, and excel academically. The branch's female students are among its top performers, and the latest Global MBA cohort in Dubai included the largest group of female students since launch. "Who you study with matters," Bessiso added.



📌 University of Manchester, Forbes Middle East Women's Summit

Our students are senior professionals from diverse backgrounds, and the peer learning experience is invaluable. We also showcase our female students and alumni to inspire others and ensure a continuous pipeline of talent.

"Bessiso also highlighted the importance of structured talent development for organisations seeking to support women's growth: "Talent and leadership are genderless. Organisations must identify individuals with leadership potential and provide the right support at the right time. Programmes such as mentoring, networking, and access to learning are essential. Celebrating and sharing success stories encourages others and builds a culture of collaboration and empathy."

The University of Manchester – Dubai continues to develop partnerships with leading companies, professional bodies, and social responsibility partners across the region. Its mission is to make a difference through teaching, research, and social responsibility, and to foster a vibrant community of students and alumni. Participation in the Forbes Middle East Women's Summit reflects the University's ongoing commitment to supporting the region's ambitions for innovation, inclusion, and sustainable growth.

Enthral.ai Unveils Agentic AI-based Role-Ready Solution

Helping HR and L&D leaders build skilled workforces that are ready to deliver from day one.

To empower HR and L&D leaders to build a skilled workforce ready to deliver from day one, Enthral.ai, a leading provider of a skilling platform powered by Agentic AI, has now launched a new set of AI Agents focused on building role-readiness. Targeted to address the biggest challenge in Learning and Development (L&D) today —providing outcome-driven training—the role-ready AI agents supercharge the platform's capability to create measurable workforce impact at scale.

While role readiness has always been a key L&D objective, rapid shifts in the world of work, driven by macroeconomic trends, industry dynamics, and tech acceleration, have made it a pressing priority for enterprises today. Enthral's Agentic AI skilling platform, with its newly launched AI Agents for role-readiness, enables HR and L&D teams to instantly transform a job role into a performance-oriented learning journey.

With a simple input of a role, say Fraud Analyst or Retail Relationship Manager, the system generates a complete “show me, try me, test me” path where learners watch how it's done, practice in safe environments through interactive role-plays and real-time AI coaching, and get tested with AI Proctoring. This performance is assessed, logged, and auditable, giving HR and L&D teams confidence that their teams are ready to perform before stepping out into real-world situations.

What makes the Role-Ready solution especially powerful is that it is both industry- and role-agnostic. Whether in BFSI, manufacturing, retail, healthcare, IT services, or for upskilling customer-facing teams, blue-collar workforce, frontline employees, the platform's AI Agents ensure all learners are coached and evaluated against the exact demands of their role. Further, the platform's easy integration with existing HR tech stacks, along with the ability to build and train custom agents for diverse roles and goals, represents the next wave of enterprise skilling. In this model, HR and L&D leaders don't just deliver training, they become strategic enablers of ROI through faster onboarding, improved compliance, higher productivity, and consistent readiness across distributed teams.

“Enterprises need to move beyond static learning to adaptive role readiness. HR and L&D leaders don’t need more training, they require solutions that give them the confidence that their workforce can perform from day one, making upskilling not just an input, but a demonstrable business outcome,” said Sammir Inamdar, Co-founder and CEO, Enthral.

Globally, the Agentic AI market is projected to grow from USD 7.06 .

billion in 2025 to USD 93.20 billion by 2032 with a CAGR of 44.6% during the forecast period. As enterprises shift from passive copilots to autonomous agents that drive measurable outcomes, Enthral's role-ready agents bring this breakthrough to the skilling ecosystem, making workforce readiness not just faster, but smarter.



Digital Consumer Trends 2025 Deloitte's Report is Out

Reveals AI adoption surge, social commerce boom, and changing digital behaviours in the UAE and KSA

- **As Gen AI becomes mainstream and smartphone dominance continues, consumers in the UAE and KSA are embracing AI-powered tools, social commerce, and connected devices**
- **A quarter of AI users also cite privacy as a top concern, with rising digital subscription costs also shaping consumer choices**

Deloitte has released its latest Digital Consumer Trends 2025 report, providing key insights into how consumers in the UAE and Saudi Arabia (KSA) are engaging with digital technology, media, and connectivity. The study, which surveyed 2,000 consumers aged 18-50 across both markets, highlights the rapid adoption of generative AI, the continued dominance of smartphones, the growing appeal of connected devices, and the shift towards social commerce.

The findings reveal a significant increase in AI usage, with 58% of respondents having used generative AI tools such as ChatGPT or Google Gemini, markedly higher than in the UK or European markets. The report also notes that

73% of consumers in KSA and the UAE have made a purchase through social media in the past year, signaling the growing influence of influencer-driven shopping experiences.

Generative AI becomes mainstream, but awareness gaps remain

Consumers in KSA and the UAE are embracing AI-powered tools at an accelerated pace. While 55% of generative AI users engage with these tools weekly or daily, driven by personal, educational and professional applications. 20% of respondents are still unfamiliar with AI technology. The study finds that data privacy concerns remain a key barrier, for infrequent users in particular, with one in four citing privacy as their top concern.

Smartphones remain dominant, but smart home adoption lags

The smartphone continues to be the primary digital device in the region, with 96% of consumers using it daily. Meanwhile, 89% of consumers in the UAE and KSA plan to purchase a new connected device in the next 12 months, with smartphones, smartwatches, and laptops ranking as the most desired categories. Meanwhile, smart home device adoption is still emerging, trailing behind Western markets, though interest in connected living solutions is steadily rising.

Social media is the go-to for news and shopping

News consumption habits have changed significantly, with social media surpassing traditional news outlets as the go-to source for current events. While 56% of consumers rely on social media for news, only 30% watch television news, and 22% visit news websites. The report also highlights growing concerns about online misinformation, with 48% of UAE consumers stating they encounter false information more frequently than a year ago.

Social media's influence on consumer behavior has reached unprecedented levels, with 73% of respondents reporting at least one transaction through social platforms in the past year. Social commerce is gaining traction as a preferred method of online shopping, boosted by influencer recommendations and affiliate links.

Streaming and digital subscriptions face pricing pressure

The report finds that while over half of consumers in KSA and the UAE subscribed to a video streaming service in the past year, the rising cost of subscriptions is leading to cancellations. 21% of respondents cited lack of use, and 20% cited cost as reasons for unsubscribing. Additionally, 47% of consumers have been affected by streaming platforms cracking down on account sharing.

Emmanuel Durou, Technology, Media & Telecommunications Leader at Deloitte Middle East, said: “The UAE and Saudi Arabia are at the forefront of digital transformation, with consumers embracing AI, mobile-first lifestyles, and social commerce at an impressive rate. This is evidenced by the remarkable adoption rates of Gen AI and connected devices in the UAE and Saudi Arabia. These trends speak not only to the region's tech-savvy population but also to the significant investments in infrastructure and digital transformation here.

“This shift presents opportunities for businesses to rethink engagement strategies, particularly as AI continues to reshape how consumers search, shop, and interact online. It provides a clear roadmap for companies looking to tap into these exciting markets. However, as reliance on digital platforms grows, so do concerns around data privacy and misinformation. Organizations must strike a balance between innovation and trust to meet the evolving expectations of today's

“digital consumer.”

The Digital Consumer Trends 2025 report highlights the fast-evolving tech, media, and telecom landscape in the Middle East. As generative AI adoption grows, social commerce expands, and digital content consumption shifts, businesses must adapt to these trends to remain competitive.

For detailed insights and key takeaways, access the full report [here](#).



The Hidden Pitfalls of L&D Projects – And How to Fix Them

Many organizations invest heavily in learning and development, yet too many initiatives fall short. The issue isn't commitment, it's recurring mistakes that quietly undermine success.

At SkillUp MENA, we've seen what derails projects and how to avoid it:



Scope Creep

Goals expand beyond control.



The Ghost Client

Stakeholders disengage mid-project.



The Customization Paradox

Over-tailoring delays delivery.



The Forgotten Campaign

Poor promotion reduces adoption.

We don't just deliver training, we partner with you to ensure learning is impactful, scalable, and engaging.

**Scan the QR to book a
call with a SkillUp expert.**



Deloitte Middle East Launches Human Capital Trends 2025 Report

Navigating Work in the Age of AI, Agility, and Human Sustainability

The report explores how AI, skills-based models, and human sustainability are reshaping the future of work across the region, as employers balance empowerment and control to deliver growth

From AI and robotics to changing workforce expectations and national transformation agendas, the report underscores how the very definition of work is changing. In the Middle East, countries like the UAE, Saudi Arabia, and Qatar are investing heavily in human capital development, while also leading the charge in digital transformation through strategies like **Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030**, the **UAE's AI Strategy 2031**, and **Qatar National Vision 2030**.

A few standout findings from the report:

- **AI is not just a tool—it's redefining roles.** From recruitment to performance management, AI is embedded across the workforce, raising urgent questions about purpose, value, and what it means to be "human" at work.
- **Rigid hierarchies are giving way to workforce ecosystems.** The shift to skills-based models, supported by programs like

the **Human Capability Development Program** in Saudi Arabia and the **UAE's Advanced Skills Program**, is helping organizations move beyond job titles to tap into dynamic talent pools.

- **Human sustainability is the new business imperative.** Well-being, inclusion, and meaningful work aren't "nice to haves"—they're foundational to resilience, retention, and relevance in the workplace of tomorrow.

"In one of the most dynamic talent markets in the world, Middle East organizations have an opportunity to lead—by designing systems that are both high-performing and deeply human,"

said Samir Khayzaran, Partner and Organization & Work Transformation Leader at Deloitte Middle East. "This report challenges leaders to move beyond legacy thinking and reimagine how people, technology, and culture intersect."

“The real transformation is a mindset shift—from controlling systems to empowering people,” said Dania Nourallah, Partner in Human Capital at Deloitte Middle East. “Future-ready organizations design around people, unlocking creativity, resilience, and progress at scale.

Each mini-study in the report zooms in on a different facet of transformation—from redefining managerial roles and rethinking performance to reclaiming organizational capacity and supporting young talent entering the workforce.

The Human Capital Trends 2025 report offers a practical blueprint for policymakers, HR professionals, and business leaders looking to turn bold national ambition into lasting organizational impact. All eight articles from the report can be found [here](#).



Abu Dhabi Partners with Global Tech Leaders to Support Major AI Training Initiative for Public Sector

Microsoft, Amazon Web Services (AWS), Oracle University, and Core42 will equip more than 20,000 government employees with cutting-edge AI skills and tools

The Department of Government Enablement – Abu Dhabi (DGE) announced further partnerships with Microsoft, AWS, Oracle University and Core42, a G42 Company.

The collaboration supports DGE's initiative by providing government employees with access to AI learning programmes, accelerating Abu Dhabi's drive to become the world's first fully AI-native government by 2027.

H.E. Dr. Yasir Al Naqbi, a Director General at DGE, said: **"Abu Dhabi is already living the**

AI future and we're scaling it across every level of government. By joining forces with global leaders in technology, we are equipping our workforce with world-class AI expertise. This commitment turns our ambition into tangible progress as we near our goal of becoming the world's first AI-native government by 2027. Abu Dhabi is setting the benchmark of what AI-powered public service looks like both for our people and as a model for the world."



Building on a foundation of 95 per cent workforce readiness and more than 100 live AI use cases deployed across more than 40 government entities, the initiative delivers best-in-class skilling courses and state-of-the-art tools to enable over 20,000 public servants to deliver AI-powered services for the Abu Dhabi community.

The programmes feature enhanced, role-based learning pathways; spanning executives, policy leaders, programme managers, data practitioners, engineers, and frontline teams, offered in Arabic and English.

As part of the collaboration with Microsoft, the AI Skills Initiative will accelerate capability-building across strategic sectors to support responsible and enterprise-scale AI deployment. AWS will deliver comprehensive AI-focused training and its School of Security (SoS) programme to advance digital transformation and cybersecurity skills with AWS Skill Builder integrated into DGE's Tomouh platform for seamless access to learning content.

Oracle University brings globally recognised AI and data management credentials integrated within government learning pathways. Meanwhile, Core42, in collaboration with global

partners, provides access to advanced AI models, empowering the development of custom solutions that further enhance public services.

By consolidating advanced training, industry-recognised certifications, and hands-on labs, DGE empowers Abu Dhabi's workforce to deepen expertise that sets a global benchmark for responsible and effective AI deployment in the public sector. This comprehensive approach accelerates digital transformation and ensures that AI is applied human-centrally, underpinning Abu Dhabi as a world leader in AI-powered public service.

Partner Quotes

Amr Kamel, General Manager, Microsoft UAE, said:

"Abu Dhabi is setting a global benchmark for public sector innovation, and Microsoft is proud to support this journey. Through our AI National Skills Initiative, we are equipping government employees at every level with advanced digital and AI capabilities. By partnering with

Abu Dhabi's Department of Government Enablement, we're helping public servants unlock the full potential of AI—empowering them to deliver smarter, faster, and more personalised services for every citizen, resident and business in Abu Dhabi. Our commitment is to ensure that every government employee has the skills and tools needed to lead in an AI-enabled future, driving excellence in public service and supporting Abu Dhabi's vision to become the world's first fully AI-native government."

Chris Erasmus, General Manager, UAE, Rest of Middle East and North Africa at AWS, said:

"AWS is proud to enable AI transformation across Abu Dhabi's public sector through this program. By integrating the government's learning management system with the AWS Skill Builder, alongside our AWS School of Security program, we're helping build advanced AI

capabilities and enhance cybersecurity awareness among government employees. This collaboration demonstrates how technology education can accelerate government innovation and digital transformation."

Amr El Guindy, VP & GM Customer Success Services, MEA, Oracle, said:

"Abu Dhabi's commitment to building AI capabilities across every government role is inspiring. By integrating our globally recognised AI and data management credentials into DGE's learning pathways, we're helping public servants apply AI confidently and responsibly in real-world scenarios."

Talal M. Al Kaissi, EVP, Chief Partnerships & Government Affairs Officer, Core42, said:

"We are proud to support Abu Dhabi in creating a truly AI-native government. Through strategic collaborations with leading technology partners, Core42 empowers public servants to develop custom AI solutions, enabling smarter, faster, and more personalised services for the community."

Heading The Rise of Emirati Women in Leadership

Ignite White Paper offers powerful insights into business in complex times.

International Women's Day, powerful reminder of progress, resilience, and ambition. Across boardrooms in Abu Dhabi, Dubai, Sharjah, and beyond, Emirati women are not just stepping into leadership roles, they are reshaping what leadership looks like in one of the world's fastest-moving economies.

The numbers speak volumes. Women now make up 66% of the UAE's government workforce and hold an impressive 75% of leadership roles within government entities. In the private sector, Emirati women now occupy 15% of board positions in listed companies, a figure that has doubled over the past five years.

But beyond these milestones lies a deeper story: one of navigating complex expectations, leading under pressure, and balancing cultural values with commercial vision.

For many Emirati women in leadership, the pressure is both intense and often unseen. They walk a fine line, honouring deep-rooted cultural traditions while driving forward innovation and growth.

They carry the responsibility of representing their heritage with pride while competing on a global stage. They balance family expectations with the ambition to lead and succeed in high-stakes environments. The dual pressures of cultural and commercial demands require not only resilience, but also remarkable emotional intelligence, mental agility and strategic clarity.

The way Emirati women leaders navigate pressure offers powerful lessons, not just for women in business, but for anyone operating in today's complex, multicultural environments. Their ability to balance competing stakeholder expectations with clarity and composure is a model for leadership in the modern UAE and beyond.

Download Your White paper:

[emirati-women-leadership-uae-whitepaper-ignite-training-2025.pdf](#)



MoHRE Gets Tough on Companies Not Complying with Employment Law

Strict Measures Implemented Against Establishments With Workers Not Actively Engaging In Licensed Activities

The Ministry of Human Resources and Emiratisation (MoHRE) has affirmed its commitment to implementing strict measures against establishments that have been flagged for not effectively engaging in their licensed activities and for having one or more registered workers without an actual employment relationship.

Since the beginning of the year, the Ministry's monitoring system has detected around 1,300 establishments, owned by approximately 1,800 employers, that were not effectively practicing their licensed activities, despite having registered workers without a real employment relationship. Strict measures were taken against these establishments, including suspending the issuance of new work permits, imposing more than AED 34 million in fines on their owners, and placing them in the third category in the classification scheme for private sector establishments.

Furthermore, and as part of the MoHRE's efforts to ensure establishment owners comply with the UAE's human resources laws and regulations, measures were implemented against owners of these establishment to prevent them from registering any new establishments in the Ministry's systems, in line with the provisions of Federal Decree-Law

No. (33) of 2021 on Regulating Labor Relations, Cabinet Resolution No. (21) of 2020 Concerning Service Fees and Administrative Fines in the MoHRE, and Ministerial Resolution No. (318) of 2024 on the Procedure for Addressing Establishments with Registered Employees Not Conducting Their Licensed Activities.

The Ministry of Human Resources and Emiratisation called on employers whose establishments cease operations for any reason to cancel their licenses and settle the status of their workers in accordance with the legal procedures in place in the UAE, in order to avoid legal accountability.

The Ministry went on to emphasise that an inactive licensed establishment maintaining registered workers constitutes a serious violation. The legal consequences apply to both the establishment owners and the registered workers, particularly in cases where no genuine employment relationship exists, a clear violation of the legislation.

The MoHRE highlighted the efficiency and effectiveness of its field-based and smart monitoring and inspection system in detecting and taking action against such establishments. Leveraging comprehensive indicators on each establishment's activities,

,authorities can assess its operational status. This assessment is based on factors including authorised business activity, the number of sponsored workers, transaction movements with the Ministry, and other criteria verified through field inspections.

The Ministry of Human Resources and Emiratization expressed confidence in the level of awareness among employers and the community regarding the seriousness of such violations and their negative impact on the labour market, as well as both parties in the fake employment relation in question, urging the public to report any unlawful practices through its call centre on 60059000, or its smart application and official website.





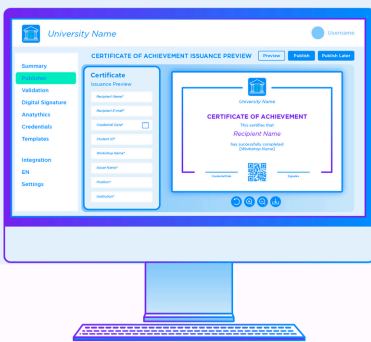
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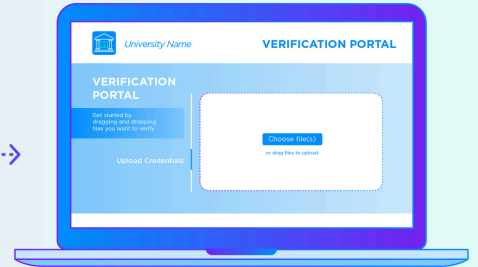
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Chief Information Officer at United Arab Emirates University

Book Review: Activating a Higher Blueprint for Human Evolution by Dr. Carol Talbot PhD

A Revolution in Human Potential

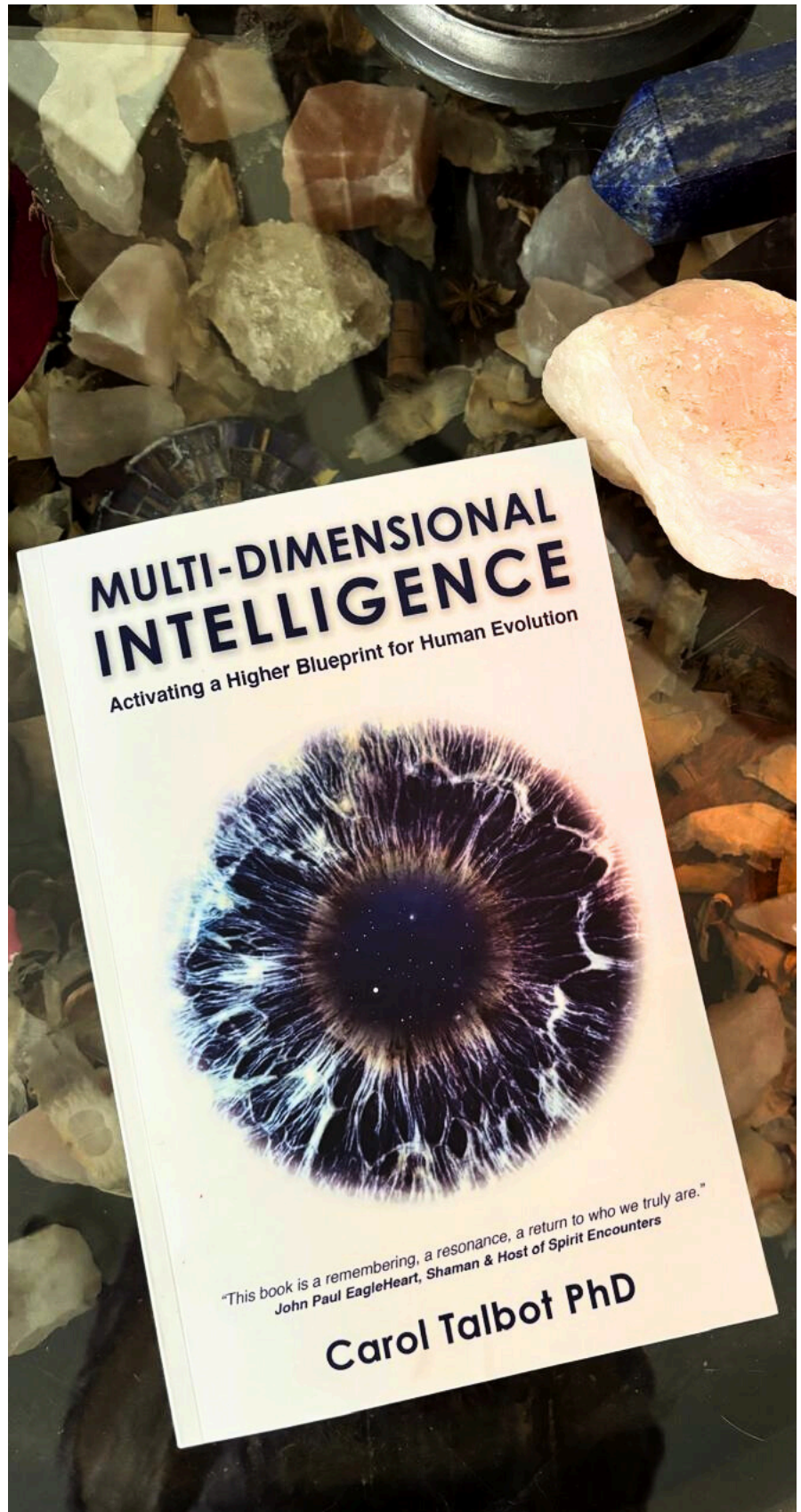
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WELCOME TO THE ME HR & LEARNING AWARDS 2025

ME HR & LEARNING Introduction

The **ME HR & Learning** Achievement Awards will recognize the region's most outstanding HR & Learning achievements for 2025.

The winners will be announced in January 2026. With an impressive surge in submissions from across the region, this year's entries showcase the innovation, dedication, and transformative impact being driven by HR and L&D professionals in today's rapidly evolving workplace.

As anticipation builds, the ME HR & L Awards promise to highlight not only outstanding achievements but also emerging trends that are redefining talent development and organizational growth. The winners will be announced next month, shining a well-deserved spotlight on the individuals and organizations pushing the boundaries of HR and learning innovation.

The selection of winning individuals and organizations will be based on comprehensive research, ratings from industry experts, and careful deliberations on their innovations, services, and solutions.

**Awards Entry Submission Deadline was
30th November 2025.**

**Details for the 2026 Awards would be announced in
January 2026.**



HR & Learning Award Categories

HR team of the year
L&D team of the year
Best Learning & Development Strategy
Best Talent Management Strategy
Best HR technology strategy
Best recruitment strategy
Best CSR strategy
Best Reward & Recognition Strategy
Best career planning & management strategies
Best approaches in Talent acquisition
Best use of Diversity/Inclusion/Equity/ Equality
Best Talent spotting approaches
Best advances in gaming/gamification / simulation technology
Best blended learning program strategies
Best Employee engagement & retention strategies

Best advances in leading a remote workforce
Best approaches in L&D implementation strategies
Best approaches in learning measurement
Best use of support structures post training
Best onboarding strategies
Best HIPO strategies
Best approaches to experiential learning
Best performance management strategies
Best use of technology in training
Best internal awards strategy
Best flexible work strategy
Best on-the-job training structure
Best learning measurement strategies
Best TNA strategies
Best use of AI / VR / AR
Best practices for internal E-learning

The winners will be announced in **January 2026**.

Stay tuned as we prepare to celebrate the region's BEST.

Annual HR & Learning Community Survey 2025

Help Shape the Future of HR & Learning in the Middle East

Take the survey here:

At ME HR & Learning, we believe that progress in our profession begins with collaboration, shared insight, and real data from the people driving change — **you**, our community of HR and Learning professionals.

We're thrilled to announce the launch of our **Annual HR & Learning Community Survey 2025** — a comprehensive 20-question survey that takes just **10 minutes** to complete.

This year's survey focuses on the evolving challenges and opportunities in areas such as:

- Employee engagement and retention
- Learning and skills development
- Technology in HR and Learning
- Future workplace trends
- Leadership and culture

Your input will help us capture a clear snapshot of where the HR & Learning landscape stands today — and where it's headed next.

What's in it for you?

- Receive a free copy of the 2026 HR & Learning Insights Report when it's released
- Get a chance to win a 1-hour consultancy session with one of our expert members, offering tailored advice for your HR or L&D strategy



It only takes a few minutes, but your contribution will make a lasting impact on the region's HR & Learning community.

Take the survey here:

Together, let's continue building a stronger, more connected HR & Learning ecosystem across the Middle East.

WoW HR & Learning Awards 2026

Recognition for exceptional initiatives dedicated to improving HR & Learning

As part of a new Initiative in 2025 ME HR & Learning set out to recognise individuals and or their organizations who are making exceptional contributions in the **World of Work (WOW)** in HR & Learning throughout our region.

If you recognise individuals', external organisations, or your own please contact us with a short paragraph and photo describing one, some, or all of the questions below:

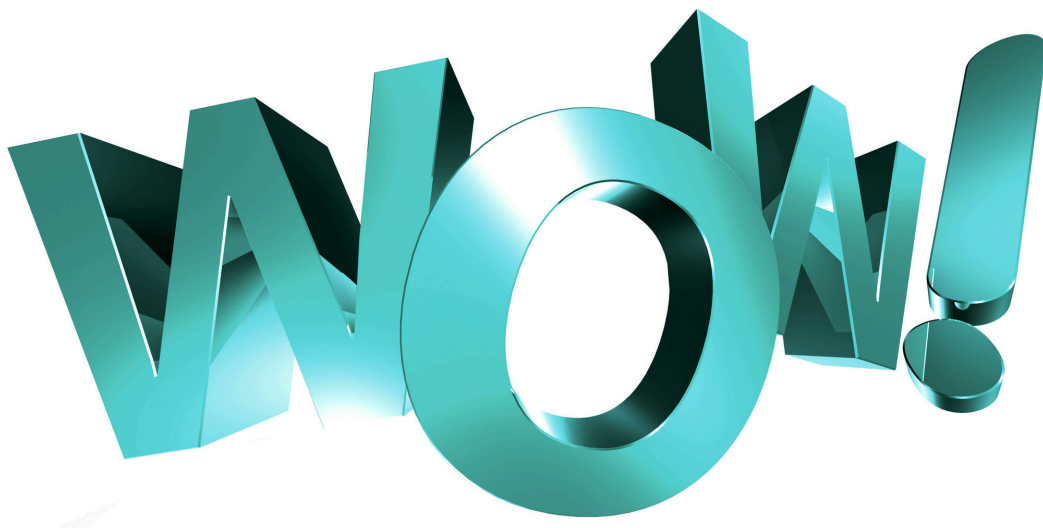
- 1) What new initiatives are you introducing in 2026?
- 2) How are you able to build a better culture of L&D in your organisations?
- 3) What will be your key measurements of success in 2026, for HR & Learning?

We will then:

- a) Publish this on our site
- b) Add to our next virtual magazine issue
- c) Enter you into the 2026 Annual Awards.

We would love to hear how would be contributing to HR & Learning in 2026.

Email us at info@me-hrl.com



Where to find Jobs in the UAE?

Monster.com is one of the foremost websites for jobs available in the UAE.

For the latest in the UAE job market, search:

1. Monster.com
2. Bayt.com
3. Hays.ae
4. gulftalent.com
5. dubaicareers.ae

Search for salary and career advice. Some allow you to download your CVs direct, advise you on covering letters, and cv writing. They offer help on interviewing skills, career development and what to do if you wish to move on.



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Community & Consultation



Connect with experts to share knowledge and tackle workplace challenges.

Knowledge & Strategy



Access research and tools to align people, performance, and growth.

Solutions & Impact



Unlock evidence-based resources to boost leadership and results.

Who We Are?

BPME is the Middle East's first dedicated platform for business psychology and organizational development. Built to connect experts, HR leaders, and professionals, we provide a trusted space to share knowledge, tools, and services that elevate workplaces across the region.

What We Do?

We empower professionals and organizations by offering a hub of resources, expert insights, and networking opportunities. From evidence-based practices to cutting-edge solutions, BPME helps you overcome workplace challenges, enhance leadership, and unlock new levels of growth.



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